

Yolla Bolly

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE



WASHINGTON

EM (G)
Maps, D-5, Geographic Names
(Angeles & California)
Swarthout Valley,
Thomes Creek,
Yolla Bolly Mtns.

October 28, 1927.

District Forester,

San Francisco, Calif.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of October 20 is received.

The names Thomes Creek and Swarthout Valley will be presented to the Geographic Board for their consideration at the next meeting.

Regarding the change in the spelling of the mountains from Yolla Bolly to Yola Bola:

In order to get this matter in shape for proper understanding and bring the record up to date, it seems desirable to give the complete history of the spelling of this name, as far as the records of the United States Geographic Board show.

The first correspondence before the Board is a letter signed by "Mary C. Gannett, Secretary of the Forest Service" under date of June 15, 1907. In this letter Miss Gannett asked for a decision by the Board on the spelling of the words Yallo Bally. On December 4, 1907, after obtaining considerable information from various authorities, local residents, etc., the Board decided on the spelling of the words as Yola Buli. Among the references to the various spellings of this name the Board has the following:

Yallo Bally: U. S. Geological Survey, Red Bluff sheet, 1902. Crane atlas, 1907. Rand-McNally atlas, 1907.

Yola Buli: Professor A. L. Kroeber of the University of California.

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Yolla Bally or Balley: Mr. W. A. Fish, District Attorney of Tehama County. In his letter Mr. Fish says: "This name is in common use by the Mad River Indians. It means 'high mountains'. I prefer the spelling Yalla Bally."

Yalla Bally: Mr. A. H. Allen, University of California, Berkeley, editor of the University Press, also wrote in favor of the spelling Yalla Bally, agreeing with Mr. Fish.

On December 4, 1907, the Forest Service was informed that the Board had adopted Yola Buli as the proper and official spelling.

Professor Kroeber stated that the word yola means "snow" and buli "mountain". He was an anthropologist in the University of California. Concerning this matter Kroeber writes as follows:

"The word bally means 'mountain' in the Wintun language. Yallo Bally means 'snow mountain'. The 'o' is open or broad and pronounced as a in 'all'. See Powers' Tribes of California."

Professor Kroeber goes on to state that he feels the Board should stick to Yola Buli as being nearer the pronunciation of the words by the Indians than any other spelling.

The next appearance of this name in the records of the Board is on March 4, 1908, when the Board reconsidered its decision of 1907 and adopted the spelling of the latter of the two words as Bolly and added an l in the first name, making the revised spelling Yolla Bolly.

The letter from Dr. Merriam which was before the Board explains that he had spent considerable time investigating the various spellings of this name. He furnished the Board with nine authorities, no two of whom spelled the first word alike, but six out of the nine spelled the second word as Bolly. Dr. Merriam therefore believed that spelling should be adopted by the Board. The Board evidently agreed with him and reversed its previous decision, making the official spelling Yolla Bolly.

There is no record in the files of the Washington office of this Service or in the records of the Geographic Board of any communication under case heading DEW, Atlas, California, of August 2, 1919, as mentioned in the second paragraph of your letter of October 20.

On April 21, 1914, there is a letter from William B. Greeley, silviculturist in the Washington office, at that time a member of the Board, with a view to establishing the spelling as Yola Bola. Colonel Greeley quoted a letter from Acting Supervisor Coffman under date of April 7, 1914 in which Coffman requested the change in the name, giving a number of reasons, mostly the opinion of men who had not given the matter serious consideration and evidently knew little or nothing of the origin of the word. On May 12, 1914, at a meeting of the full Board, attended by Colonel Greeley, the Board refused to change its previous decision and adhered to the spelling Yolla Bolly adopted at the meeting of March 4, 1908.

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Under such conditions, and considering that this decision has stood for nearly 14 years and that the present Forester himself acquiesced in it while a member of the Board, I can not see my way clear to request the Board to consider the matter again with a view to another revision of previous decisions. I am sure you will appreciate that the spelling of such words involves more than merely local sentiment. The Board seldom adopts a name or the spelling of a name without careful investigation into all available authorities, and while common use has a great deal to do with its acceptance, nevertheless if the Board were to change names or spellings every time local citizens got the idea into their heads they should be changed there would be chaos among the map makers and geographers and an extremely unsatisfactory situation would ensue. There must be some reasonable permanence in names of this kind.

I question very sincerely whether any of the people who have talked to the Supervisor about this name have gone into its meaning and consulted with any worthwhile authorities. Under such conditions, therefore, the spelling on the new map must comply with the Board's decision of March 4, 1908, which authorized the spelling of the name as Yolla Bolly. While it will be necessary to go ahead and not delay the printing of the maps any longer, I do not wish to be

arbitrary in taking the position here outlined. If in the opinion of yourself or the Forest Supervisor a decision by the full Board on this matter should again be sought, I will be very glad to put it up to the Board at its next meeting, and will agree to keep entirely out of the discussion and let them decide it on the merits of the case as they see it.

Very truly yours,

WILL C. BARNES

WILL C. BARNES
Assistant Forester.